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SPACE CENTER Roundup

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1999 Open House attracts record crowd

By Nicole Cloutier

JSC HOSTED MORE THAN 120,000 VISITORS at this year's Open House held August 28, some of which came from all over the world.

Gehman, his wife, Margaret, and their two children, Nicholas, 7, and Lilya, 2, enjoyed lunch under a shade tree near Bldg. 1 after a morning filled with facility tours, rocket building and meeting astronauts. Nicholas and Lilya are from Russia and were adopted by the Gehmans, who live in Houston. They say the international scope of the space program has a special meaning for their family.

"We can point out different things to them, like the Soyuz or the space station mockups, and say, 'Look Nicholas, this is from Russia,'" said Margaret Gehman. "It's really neat to be able to show them things from their home."

The Gehmans are regular visitors to Open House, but for many, this year's event was the first visit to JSC, or to any of our nation's space centers.

"It's amazing to see how much goes in to preparing for each mission," said Michelle Briscoe, in town from Yorba Linda, Calif., with her two children. They were able to visit the Sonny Carter Training Facility during Open House while on a trip visiting her sister, Christina Mattack of Clear Lake. "I was surprised to learn that they begin these practice dives a year in advance of the mission."

"The pool is REALLY neat," said Kyle Briscoe, 11, and a self-proclaimed space fan. "Just that it's so big and 40 feet deep!"

"Our father worked for Rockwell," said Mattack. "He's retired now, but we never got to see 'behind-the-scenes' like this when he worked on the program."

An inside look at the how the space program works and all the spin-off benefits derived from NASA research is what Open House is all about. For some Open House volunteers, the inspiration they receive from sharing NASA's achievements with the community is just as rewarding.

"I enjoyed it immensely and think more employees should volunteer for next year," said Mark McGill, GHG shuttle safety engineer. McGill volunteered for the first time this year, assisting with the popular Rocket Stomp booth at Bldg. 2. "To me, that booth symbolizes all that JSC, and NASA, are about. The kids loved it and were full of questions. It appealed to all ages and allowed children to participate while teaching them at the same time."

"This was a true spectacle of space flight," said Rob Navias, chairman

of the 1999 Open House. "It was an amazing way to share our work with the public and to inform them about how their tax dollars are being spent for the benefit of all of us on Earth as we head into the new millennium."

Visitors of all ages were able to see, up close and personal, the nation's premier human space flight center, including some areas opened to the public for the first time and some special visiting exhibits.

Thank you for this fun and fantastic learning experience. My whole family, especially me, really loved it! Big thanks to all the volunteers.

— Anonymous
from comment card returned
at Open House 1999

"This is a great place," said Mark Anderson, a senior aerospace engineer from Iowa State University. He was joined by a small contingent from the school that brought a transportable wind tunnel for display at Open House. Inside the wind tunnel, which is about the size of a vendor cart at the local mall, is a small remote-controlled airplane that visitors can actually 'fly' from a mock console facing the tunnel.

"The kids love it!" added Anderson. "Some of them sit right down, and think that they know what they're doing. Others just stand to the side, and watch in awe. It's a fun way for us to explain some simple principles of flight to them, but we have to

bite our tongues while we work with the kids and make sure we don't bore them with a bunch of techno-babble."

The Flight Demonstration Wind Tunnel, which was built this year by the students, was like many booths at Open House that had a steady stream of visitors waiting to "try it out" and a thick crowd of spectators. They estimate 60 children per hour were able to try out the airplane.

Another new attraction included the programs in Teague Auditorium. This year's presentations, which were held all day, contained visual excitement and entertainment.

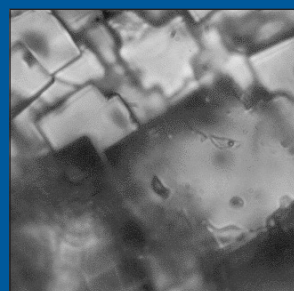
The presentations, by Capt. John Young, the STS-93 crew, Astronauts Cady Coleman, Tom Jones, Yvonne Cagle and Scientist Chuck Lloyd, ranged from a recap of missions past as well as discussion of the future of space exploration. As a fitting finale to the series of mission and technology presentations, the Clear Lake Symphony filled the auditorium with celestial music while out-of-this-world imagery captured the visual aspects of space exploration.

The credit for the success of Open House goes to the more than 2,800 volunteers and the growing experience base for hosting such an event. ■

Open House photo contest winners will be announced in the next issue of the Roundup.



Open House visitors tour the Iowa State University wind tunnel exhibit.



JSC scientists
strike water
in meteorite.

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Joys of space
flight shared
at air show.

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College students
soar to new
heights.

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